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Translation as a Lasting Creation

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Translation is not simply the process of shifting one language into another. It requires us to be reconstructed. We must change our way of being—our ordinary ‘mode’. It is like a re-creation of who you are. This is my impression from participating in these projects: the ‘International Colloquium between the Institute of Education (IoE), University of London, and the Graduate School of Education, Kyoto University (Kyoto)’ and attending the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain (PESGB) held at New College, University of Oxford. We attendees, eight graduate students and three teachers from Kyoto University, had a great time with wonderful people there, even though we had difficulty surviving in British English!

Let me start with the hardest part of it: the experience of ‘translation’.

We graduate students from Kyoto University participated in a pre-symposium for this project in February 2007, under the guidance of Professor Paul Standish from IoE. It was a rehearsal for the International Colloquium. Attendees were required to present their own studies (partly in relation to Professor Standish’s book, *Beyond the Self*) in English. It turned out to be a great opportunity—and a fruitful experience. Everyone did a great job in the foreign language. However, as all of the attendees except Professor Standish were Japanese, it was relatively easy. Even if we had difficulties in making statements in the foreign language, we shared a common background—what others wanted to say in what kind of style, the peculiar cultural expressions we unconsciously shared. We were proud of ourselves speaking in English, even though we got very nervous, as most of us had only ever lived in Japan. To present my own study in a foreign language requires opening myself to strangers far more than presenting in my mother tongue does. I cannot either use subtle expressions for difficult ideas, or go into the details of complex ideas because of my poor language (English) skills. This means that I must open myself up and show my sincerity to other people. Our communication mostly depends on this attitude of open-mindedness.

At the Colloquium in March 2008, twenty-six attendees in total gave presentations, and we graduate students from Kyoto University had responding partners from IoE. Jade Nguyen was my respondent. Jade and I exchanged several mails and met beforehand at a pub over ‘London Pride’ (beer). I believe that getting together in a relaxed atmosphere makes us feel closer, and this happened to Jade and me. Even though it was the first time Jade discussed G. Bataille (my research topic), she understood what I was trying to say in my paper and developed it by connecting it with her own study, and we presented a good combination at the Colloquium. I very much appreciate her making such a great effort for our presentation. I believe other people understand similar experiences. Attendees from IoE and the audience were very patient and attentively tried to understand our English. The two-day colloquium ended with great satisfaction. Presentations, discussions and conversation over beer at a pub—everything was interconnected and it created a wonderful effect. (Discussions over

pints of beer made the communication better sometimes!)

This community continued at PESGB (Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain) held at New College, University of Oxford. To my surprise, there were many participants from all over the world. They were also foreigners who used their own mother tongues in non-academic circumstances. Some of them seemed to be frustrated expressing themselves in English. I also realized that people had their own intonations and idiosyncratic expressions which, I guess, are typical of their own language.

All these projects have made me realize that this experience is not just one of being in a different country, meeting people in London and Oxford, reading papers in English, etc. It has drastically changed my idea of translation.

For me, translation used to mean simply a technical matter—one whose central focus is to make the main point clear and not to make grammatical mistakes. After experiencing this whole project, however, translation for me is no longer a simple process of presenting a paper by converting my native language to a foreign language. Presentation itself is a process of translation: the process of the transfiguration of oneself. It is, in Bataille's words, the 'open-dialectical experience'. We must transfigure ourselves, in a quite different mode, to be in a different context. Language grounds our way of thinking, behaving, and understanding in the world, and all these together determine who you are. Being in a different culture that has developed in a different language is an experience of a lasting process of creating oneself: it is different from adding a new ability to myself and expanding my world. This realization also gives us a small but important chance to re-create ourselves.

I would like to close my report by expressing my deep gratitude to all the participants in the International Colloquium and the people I met at PESGB, especially Professor Paul Standish, Professor Masuo Koyasu and Professor Naoko Saito, who arranged all the projects, giving us this great opportunity. Special thanks to my respondent, Jade Nguyen, and to the respondents and presenters from IoE who shared valuable thoughts with us. English is not just a tool with which to communicate academic ideas. We must go beyond this idea to be engaged in a genuine cross-cultural understanding in a global academic world.

PESGB at New college, Oxford



New Colledge



Dinning Hall